

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Implication of Mimicry in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in
Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Arts in English**

by

Ghanshyam Adhikari

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathamandu

April 2009

Tribhuvan University
Kirtipur Kathmandu
Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Ghanshyam Adhikari has completed his thesis entitled “Implication of Mimicry in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*” under my supervision. He carried out his research work from June 02, 2008 to February 20, 2009. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

Ghanshyam Bhandari

Lecturer

Central Department of English

Date:

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

This thesis entitled “Implication of Mimicry in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*” by Mr. Ghanshayam Adhikari, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University has been accepted by the undersigned members of the thesis committee.

Members of Research Committee

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Internal Examiner

.....

External Examiner

.....

Head

Central Department of English

Date:

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank Mr. Ghanshyam Bhandari, Lecturer, Central Department of English (CDE), without whose encouragement and scholarly guidance, this thesis would not have been completed.

I also would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Head of CDE, and Prof. Dr. Shreedhar Lohani for their academic and moral support. Besides, Mr. Badri Acharya, and Mr. Puspa Acharya, Mr. Sadan Adhikari, and all the teachers of the CDE deserve my sincere gratitude.

I also owe the highest level of thankfulness to my parents, who always prompted me towards positive aspects of life and were ever present by me in all ups and downs of life.

I also take this moment to remember all my classmates, colleagues, brothers – Hom, Abi, Anup and all the concerned in the process of completion of Master's of Arts in English.

Last, but not the least, my sincere thanks go to my dear sister Annu, whose support enabled me to complete my dissertation.

April 2009

Ghanshyam Adhikari

Abstract

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is a novel based on the lives of black people, who, in their attempt to be like the whites are shattered mentally and physically. The young protagonist, Pecola is obsessed with having blue eyes, as they; in her understanding are the objects to give her recognition in the white world. Similarly, Pauline forgets her roots and finds her identity being a *mammy* for a white family and Cholly goes on to rape his biological daughter in a rage of passion, resulting from his hatred of the white people. Such confrontations with the whites' world make black characters the "mimic men" who have no roots and culture of their own. They lose the sense of community, their connection to their past, and their rich cultural heritage in a futile attempt to internalize the white culture and its values.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abstract

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Race, Mimicry and Identity	11
III.	Implications of Mimicry in <i>The Bluest Eye</i>	30
IV.	Conclusion	48
	Works Cited	

I. Introduction

This present thesis is based on the study of *The Bluest Eye* (1970), the first novel of African-American writer Toni Morrison. It aims to analyze the implication of mimicry in the lives of the black people.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison narrates the story of a young black girl, Pecola, who is obsessed of having blue eyes. For Pecola, blue eyes are the symbol of power, a tool to be like or a part of the white people. She is suffering from the sense of inferiority, as her same age white girls have blue eyes but she lacks them. This sense of understanding becomes absurd to most of her black community members, including her parents. However, the blue eyes, for her are the source of power.

Pecola represents the mentality of those black people, who are in the pretext of searching their identity with some white's traits. Besides, the white complexions of the white people, the blue eyes, too, are an inherent part of the white community people and their children, but the blacks don't possess such physical traits. Pecola, who restrains herself from the public, is in an assumption that blue eyes will make her like the whites, is only a representative mentality of hundreds of blacks, who long for similar traits in order to act superior than the rest.

Morrison is one of the Afro-American writers, whose works deal with the black experience and celebrate the black community. Morrison's work features mythic elements, sharp observation, compassion, and poetic language and is often concerned with the relationship between the individual and society.

Since 1960s, black writers have continued to explore the black experience, increasingly gaining national and international recognition. Works such as *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) by Maya Angelou and *Brothers and Keepers* (1984) by John Edgar Wideman have continued the tradition of black autobiography. August Wilson has explored the central conflicts facing blacks in each decade of the 20th century in an ongoing cycle of ten plays, which have won great acclaim and earned two Pulitzer Prizes. From 1993 to 1995, Rita Dove served as poet laureate of the United States, the first black woman to fill that position. Novelist Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993.

From Morrison's text, we can derive that, in her view, all good art has been politicized and the black artist has a responsibility to the black community. She aims at capturing the something that defines what makes a book black. And that has nothing to do with whether the people in the books are black or not. She thinks that one characteristic of black writers is a quality of hunger and disturbance that never ends. Her novels bear witness to the experience of the black community and blacks in that community. Her work suggests who the outlaws were, who survived under what circumstances and why, what was legal in the community as opposed to what was legal outside it. In the past, music expressed these things and kept us alive. Unfortunately music no longer serves this function and other forms of expressions, like the novel, are needed. (Source: *Microsoft Encarta 2008*)

Morrison wants her prose to recreate black speech. She wants to restore the black language, so that black community people spoke to its original power. For James Boggs, Morrison is an archetype in the process of restoring black individuality. He writes:

Language is the thing that black people love so much – the saying of words, holding them on the tongue, experimenting with them, playing with them. It's a love, a passion. Its function is like a preacher's: to make you stand up out of your seat, make you lose yourself and hear yourself. The worst of all possible things that could happen would be to lose that language. (54)

Her prose has the quality of speech; Morrison deliberately strives for this effect, which she calls aural literature. She hears her prose as she writes, and during the revision process she cuts phrasing which sounds literary or written rather than spoken. She rejects critics' assertions that her prose is rich; to those who say her prose is poetic, she responds that metaphors are natural in black speech.

Morrison wants readers to participate in her novels, to be involved actively. Readers are encouraged to create the novel with her and to help construct meaning. She uses the model of the black preacher who requires his congregation to speak, to join him in the sermon, to behave in a certain way, to stand up and to weep and to cry and to accede or to change and to modify. Here, she wants readers to say amen. Thus, her writing is meant as a communal experience, a sharing of passion and ideas and responses, with her holding the reader's hand during the experience. One small example

of her encouraging reader participation is her not using adverbs like 'softly' or 'angrily' to describe characters' speeches; the reader should recognize/feel the speaker's emotion from the writing.

She uses magic, folktales, and the supernatural in her novels because that's the way the world was for me and for the black people I know. In addition to the very shrewd, down-to-earth efficient way in which they did things and survived things, there was this other knowledge or perception, always discredited but nevertheless there.

Her family talked about their dreams in the same way they talked about things that really happened, and they accepted visitations as real. Morrison's style combines these unrealistic elements with a realistic presentation of life and characters. This mixture has been called "magical realism." Initially she objected to the label "magical realism," feeling it diminished her work or even dismissed it. Now, however, she acknowledges that it does identify the supernatural and unrealistic elements in her writing. In *The Bluest Eye* the magical appears in the failure of marigolds to bloom and the belief by some members of the community in Soaphead Church's powers.

According to Morrison, another characteristic of black writing is a distinctive irony. She's not sure that it is different from irony in white literature, and she can't describe it. It's not humor, not a laughing away of troubles. She describes this as:

Taking that which is peripheral, or violent or doomed or something that nobody else can see any value in and making value out of it or having a psychological attitude about duress is part of what made us stay alive and fairly coherent, and irony is part of that – being able to see the underside of something, as well. (56)

The context for Toni Morrison and her work is clearly linked to her race and gender. She herself identifies a black style, an ineffable quality that is curiously black and her work is steeped in popular black culture, its music and folklore. Her novels juxtapose and combine joy and pain, laughter and tears and love and death. These same combinations are the essence of blues, jazz and spirituals, and were the themes exploited by story-tellers. The tradition of black female writers to which Morrison belongs is a similarly strong factor in her work. The first black published writers in America were

female slaves: for example Phyllis Wheatley who wrote poems on various subjects like religion and social issues or Lucy Terry, author of *Bars Fight*.

Morrison is now famous, for her mysterious blend of realism and fantasy, which is rooted in black folklore, and her family's tradition of story-telling. She evokes place and culture with all the specificity of the writers, she admired as a teenager, but place and culture of an utterly different kind – that of the American underclass. In her writing as in her life, she is an anomaly combining the highest professional success with a background of poverty and racism, appealing to both the general public and academics, and obtaining the success that many black female writers have been denied.

In terms of genre, Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* can be seen as having significantly different emphases from the slave narratives of the nineteenth century, a body of works almost 6,000 in numbers. These narratives contain a longing for freedom and self respect while chronicling the slave life on the plantations, their sufferings and eventual escape. However, here in *The Bluest Eye* the plantation of slavery is mentality that they are not free from. Frederick Douglas in *Narrative of An American Slave* (1847) writes:

The Bluest Eye is not a personal account of slavery; it also encompasses the fate of all the inhabitants of the community that inhabit in. Pecola is only a composite of slave and their quest for freedom. However, she subverts the tradition of the slave narrative in many ways. Although, the subject matter is the same, Pecola ways of demanding freedom is different. (76)

The slaves of nineteenth century wrote an explicit intent to effect the abolition of slavery, had to limit their stories for fear of offending the sensibilities of their whiter readers who alone could be responsible for ending slavery. Even the immediate pain of their memories was curtailed in their accounts, rather like Pecola, who demands freedom but in her own way. The slavery of nineteenth century and before was subjective but, today it is objective, limited to material desire of being near to them in terms of showpiece.

Writing in the twentieth century, Morrison's purpose is still a corrective one: the history of slavery must not be narrative left, as she explains in her essay, "The Site of Memory." She chronicles

the psychological damage slavery inflicted on men in the figure of Paul D and Halle, in her *Beloved*. She concentrates on an elaboration of female pain, the history that is inscribed in the mental and physical scars that each woman in her narratives bears. The pain of knowing one's children, of losing husbands and being continually at risk of sexual exploitation is the worse of all, says Morrison in *Beloved*.

Black women can reclaim their history by writing about it, and the style of *Beloved*, which pays tribute to the non-literary background of black culture, places the novel at the very heart of this process, claims Keith W. Olson in *Modern America: An Outline of American History*. Commenting on the writing style of Morrison, he writes:

Morrison uses different protagonists' varying visions of events to compile her history of slavery. This can be seen as part of a contemporary trend to see history from multiple and inconclusive perspective. There are significant gap in her narratives: the past is not divided from the present, the two are interdependent and the boundaries between them are blurred. (102)

This is very different from the precision of history books, with their attention to prominent figures and the treatment of facts as fixed entities. It is possible to view *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* as 'a history of the present,' where the consequences of slavery's brutality are examined through the "re-memory" of her characters.

Morrison's literary ventures are about issues of forgetting their bitter past. She elaborates the bitter reality, like the one in *The Bluest Eye* through the character of Pecola, so that such passionate male and female and children would realize that there is nothing in attaching to the racial issues.

Commenting on issue, Cynthia A. Davis writes:

This has got to be the least read of all the books, as the subject of the book is worth forgetting, like the act of the characters in *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*. I'd written because it is about something that the characters don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people don't want to remember. I mean its national amnesia. (123)

A regular slave trade between Africa and the English North American colonies began in the early seventeenth century. Merchant's slippers of New York and New England imported slaves as regular merchandise for the planters of Maryland, Virginia and the colonies as slave.

In *Song of Solomon*, she deliberately works to counteract the loss of the folklore tradition that constitutes one of the basic elements of African American culture. Critic Thomas Le Clair notes that Morrison's skillful "Combination of social observation with bordering and allusive commentary gives her fictions the symbolic quality of myth" (323). She further says, "The search for a myth adequate to experience is one of Morrison's central themes" (323). Morrison herself is the proof of this statement as she herself explains:

The flying song of Solomon, if it means Icarus to some readers, it is fine. I want to take credit for that. But my meaning is specific: it is about black people who could fly. That was always part of the folklore of my life; flying was one of our gifts, I don't care how silly it may seem. It is everywhere. People used to talk about it, it's in the spirituals and gospels. Perhaps it was wishful thinking, escape, death, and all that. But suppose it wasn't. What might it mean? I tried to find out in *Song of Solomon*.
(Le Clair 122)

This intention of examination of cultural myths is in order to explain and broaden reality necessities a distinctly Afro centric literary approach. Thus, Morrison's style contains key elements of "African modes of storytelling" which provide "a way of bridging tradition" (Le Clair 61). Throughout her writing, Toni Morrison suggests that "living with unexamined roots as much as living with no roots create a stunned and deformed tree" (Le 124). She clearly takes this lesson to heart in the creation of her own storytelling style.

Morrison's another literary venture *Tar Baby* invokes the African American folktale that was told and retold in African American community. Critics generally interpret the novel as an examination of the conflicts that can arise when one attempts to deny one's past. In this regard Corole Iannone remarks:

Morrison suggests no easy way to understand what one's link to a heritage should be, nor does she offer infallible methods for dealing with power. Rather, with an

astonishing insight and grace, she demonstrates the pervasiveness of such dilemmas and the degree to which they affect human beings, both black and white. (216)

Obviously Morrison gives emphasize on one's past, heritage and culture. If one forgets his past, then he becomes rootless and finds himself nowhere.

Morrison herself believes that *Tar Baby* myth is originated from African myth, associated with tar baby. In an interview given to Thomas Le Clair on March, 1981, Morrison remarks: "The myth of *Tar Baby* originates from a myth originated from southern folklore, popular during in ancient Africa" (p 12). The tar lady is a black woman who is supposed to hold things together. She is a builder and cohesive force, she tells Le Clair for *The New Republic*.

Morrison examines and reconstructs the tar baby story of South. She explores what it means to be a tar baby, according to the westernized plantation version of the story of what it may mean to be a tar baby. In her western version of tar baby, she has tar baby in it, reared by the white man to catch a rabbit. She further explains that white people call black children tar baby, especially black girls. It is a name similar to nigger. Morrison has explored the tar baby tale because tar seemed to her to be odd thing to be in a western story.

In her research, she has found that there is a tar lady in African mythology. She explains her findings as: "At one time, a tar pit was a holy place at least an important place, because tar was used to build things. It came naturally out of earth; it held together things like Mose's little boat and the pyramids" (The New Republic, 1981). For Morrison, tar is sacred because it has played a pivotal role in the preservation of African culture. Moreover, it is supposed that tar baby reveals black women's spiritual power and moral wisdom to hold things together. Her idea on tar baby is as follows:

For me, the tar baby means the black women, who can hold things together. The story was a point of departure to history and prophecy. That's what I mean dusting of the myth, looking closely at it to see what it might coined. In this sense, tar baby myth functions as a metaphor for black womanhood. The tar embodies the protective and cohesive power of life, family and community as black women have. (The New Republic, 26-27)

Tar Baby is an appreciation of black women and their culture associated with its mythical aspects. It is of course an African novel however; Morrison has presented a western flavor to it, by adding a color of anti slavery mentality prevalent amongst the Afro-American people of the United States.

Even after the civil war and the popular civil rights movement in America, the mentality of slavery has not vanished. However it is in the process of roll, in one or the other way. *The Bluest Eye* is one of such an example, where the mentality factor plays an important role. James Baldwin, a famous black writer and social activist, writes in *Notes of Native Son* (1955) writes:

The past is all that makes the present coherent. History plays a crucial role in shaping up identity, both black and white. The history of slavery is personally significant for Morrison and for all black, as well as white people. The past must not be neglected or forgotten, but should be taken as a lesson. (37)

Morrison sets herself against the ‘national amnesia,’ she perceives as surrounding the issue of slavery. For Morrison, black history is the core of black history. And the obsession of characters like Pecola for having blue eyes is dangerous as it is mere imitation of the slave mentality. As Baldwin further points out, “It is not a case of forging new myths, but or re-discovering the old ones” (162). This process laid clue not only the way we really were but to the way we really are.

Among several other minor themes, Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* depicts the implication of white’s culture on black people and its consequences on their way of thinking, at the best. Besides, the novel also, showcases that the blacks will herald nothing more than intrigues and misery, from the desire of being obsessed with the white and their culture.

II. Mimicry, Race and Black Identity

Mimicry

Oxford English Dictionary defines “mimicry” as “an imitation of someone or something.” However, mimicry is not limited to mere imitation, as the word carries greater significance, especially more, when it comes inter cultural relationships. Simon Blackburn in *Dictionary of Philosophy* defines the term as used to define, “ambivalent relationship between the colonizer and the colonized” (244).

Blackburn further defines mimicry, as:

Mimicry is a physical or behavioral resemblance of one species to another to benefit itself or, vice-versa in effect, sometimes to both species. During the era of colonization, the art of mimicking was an effective weapon of the colonized to use it against its colonizers, by adopting the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values, the result is never a simple reproduction of those traits. Rather, the result is ‘blurred copy’ of the colonizer that, at times can be quite threatening. (245)

This is because; mimicry is quite near to mockery. It can appear to be parody, whatever it mimics. Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behavior of the colonized.

Mimicry has often been an overt goal of imperial policy. It has been used for the sole profit of the white people. For instance, they make God, and God is white and the blacks God also should be white. In another example, Oriental learning is advocated as the reproduction of English art and learning, in the colonized nations, including in India and Africa. However, the method by which mimicry was to be achieved indicated the underlying weakness of imperialism.

The term mimicry has been crucial in Homi Bhabha's view of the ambivalence of colonial discourse. For him:

The consequence of suggestion is that mimicry is the process which the colonized subject is reproduced as almost the same, but not the same. The copying of colonizing culture, behavior, manners and values by the colonized contains both mockery and a certain menace, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace. (86)

By mimicking the culture, custom and tradition of the white, the blacks have turned mere to bands of people, that could buzz sounds like that of stinging bees, for example, several species of otherwise defenseless moths and flies avoid predation by birds. The animal or plant being mimicked is usually an abundant species whose noxious characteristics have left a lasting impression on predators. Instead of avoiding detection by predators through camouflage, the mimicking species displays the same conspicuous warning marks or behavior as the harmful species.

In literature, colonialism is an important epoch in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years. Although many earlier civilizations had colonies, and although they perceived their relations with them to be one of that central imperium in relation to a periphery of provincial, marginal and barbarian cultures, a number of crucial factors entered into the construction of the post-renaissance practices of imperialism; Edward Said offers the following distinction: "Imperialism means the practice the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (qtd. Said 8).

Postcolonial criticism defines formerly colonized peoples as any population that has been subjected to the political domination of another population. One may see postcolonial critics draw examples from the literary works of African American as well as from, for example, the literature of aboriginal Australians or the formerly colonized population of

India. However, the tendency of postcolonial criticism to focus on global issues, on comparisons and contrasts among various peoples, means that it is up to the individual members of specific and interpretation of their own long before postcolonial criticism emerged as a powerful force in literary studies in the early 1920s.

The European domination of the New World (America) began in the late fifteenth century. Spain, France, England, Portugal and the Netherlands were the main contenders for the plunder of natural and human resources, and over the next few centuries. European empires extended themselves around the globe. During the nineteenth century Britain emerged as the largest imperial power, and by the run of the twentieth century the British Empire ruled one quarter of the earth's surface, including India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, and significant holdings in Africa, the West Indies, South America, the Middle East, and the Southeast Asia. British colonial domination continued until the end of the World War II, when India gained independence in 1947, and other colonies gradually followed suit. By 1980 Britain had last all but a few of its colonial holdings.

Although, racism and identity didn't become a major force in literary studies until the early 1990s, the cultural analysis of colonialism on which it draws has played an important role in anti-colonial political movements everywhere and took its place as a field of intellectual inquiry when colonial regimes began to topple after the World War II. As a domain within literary studies, postcolonial criticism is both a subject matter and a theoretical framework.

The scale and variety of colonial settlements generated by the expansion of European society after the Renaissance shows why the term racism and mimicry have been associated with identity. It has been seen to be a distinctive form of the more genial ideology of imperialism. Although Said's formula, which uses imperialism for the ideological force and colonialism for the practice, is a generally useful distinction, European colonialism in the post-Renaissance world became a sufficiently specialized and historically specific form of imperial expansion to justify its current general usage as a distinctive kind of political ideology.

The fact that European post-Renaissance colonial expansion was coterminous with the development of a modern capitalist system of economic exchange meant that the perception of the

colonies as primarily established to provide raw materials for the burgeoning economies of the colonial powers was greatly strengthened and institutionalized. It also meant that the relation between the colonizer and colonized was locked into a rigid hierarchy of difference deeply resistant to fair and equitable exchanges, whether economic, cultural or social.

In colonies where the subject people were of a different race, or where minority indigenous peoples existed, the ideology of race was also a crucial part of the construction and naturalization of an unequal form of intercultural relations. Race itself, with its accompanying racism and racial prejudice, was largely a product of the same post-Renaissance period, and a justification for the treatment of enslaved peoples after the development of the slave trade of the Atlantic Middle Passage from the late sixteenth century onwards. In such situations the idea of the colonial world became one of the people intrinsically inferior, not just outside history and civilization, but genetically pre-determined to inferiority. Their subjection was not just a matter of profit and convenience but also could be constructed as a natural state. The idea of the 'evolution of mankind' and the survival of the fittest 'race', in the crude application of Social Darwinism, went hand in hand with the doctrines of imperialism that evolved at the end of the nineteenth century;

The sexist culture of colonizer demonstrated their ideological alliance with patriarchal practices, as numerous commentators have noted. As a result of these new formulations, colonization could be (re)presented as a virtuous and necessary civilizing task involving education and paternalistic nurture. An example of this is Kipling's famous admonition of America in 1899 to take up the White Man's Burden's after their war against Spain in Philippines rather than follows their own anti-colonial model and offer the Filipinos independence and nationhood. In this period, and for these reasons, colonialism developed an ideology rooted in obfuscatory justification, and it's violent and essentially unjust processes became increasingly difficult to perceive behind a liberal smokescreen of civilizing task and paternalistic development and aid.

In the case of the non-indigenous inhabitants of settler colonies, the idea of a cultural inferiority exceeded that of mere provincial gaucheries as race permeated even the construction of white settlers. These were frequently characterized as having wholly degenerated from contact with

other races, as in the case of white cresols in the West Indies or, in the case of settler colonies such as Canada or Australia, as having developed specific limited colonial characteristics (physical prowess, shorting ability) but not others (cultural and social sophistication). The same practice of characterizing colonial peoples by signifiers of naivety, of social and cultural provinciality and or originally taint was a feature of English texts even as late as the early twentieth century.

This was so even for Americans, despite independence and the radical shift in their own power position in the world at large after American industrialization in the late nineteenth century, for example, the presentation of Americans in such late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century texts as Canon Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, or Shaw's *Man and Superman*. Thus the negative construction of self was as important a feature of self-representation for settler colonies as for colonies of occupation where race and the idea of an alien or decayed civilization was a feature of colonial discrimination. Although Canada had achieved independent status in the 1870s and Australia became an independent Federation in 1900, the people of both these settler colonies retained many symbolic links that emphasized their continuing dependence on the imperial center; thus, for example, Australians did not carry separate and distinctive national passports until 1946. By the end of the nineteenth century, colonialism had developed into a system of historical categorization in which certain societies and cultures were perceived as intrinsically inferior.

In Britain, at least, and arguably elsewhere too, by the end of the nineteenth century, a domestic program for the function of Empire could be clearly discerned, as Victorian society faced increasing internal dissension and division. The doctrine of the New Imperialism was in many ways a response to his perception that Britain was divided into two nations of rich and poor, industrial and non-industrial. Empire became- the principal ideological unifier across class and other social divisions in Britain. It was to be the principal; icon of national unity in the face of the widely perceived social threat of class unrest and revolution that had arisen in post-industrial British society. The other (the colonized) existed as a primary means of defining the colonizer and of creating a sense of unity beneath such differences as class and wealth and between the increasingly polarized lives of the industrialized cities that developed the wealth and that of the traditional countryside to which its

beneficiaries retreated. The colonialist system permitted a notional idea of improvement for the colonized, via such metaphors as parent/child, tree/branch, etc., which in theory allowed that at some future time the inferior colonials might be raised to the status of the colonizer. But in practice this future was always endlessly deferred.

It is significant that no society ever attained full freedom from the colonial system by the involuntary, active disengagement of the colonial power until it was provoked by a considerable internal struggle for self – determination or, most usually, by extended and active violent opposition by the colonized. It is one of the great myths of recent British colonial history in particular that the granting of independence to its colonies was the result of a proactive and deliberate policy of enlightenment on the part of the British people, a policy that distinguished British colonialism from the inferior and more rapacious European brands. Such readings are, of course, part of the construction of the ideology of late nineteenth-century imperialism in which literary representation played a vigorous part, whether actively as in the work of Kipling, or in a more ambivalent way in the works of Joseph Conrad.

Despite the anti-imperial strain in some of his writing, Conrad continues to distinguish actively between the English model of colonialism, which has 'an ideal at the back of it', and the mere rapacity of the imperialism of lesser breeds of imperialists. These specious distinctions are projected back into the narratives of the rapacious Spanish conquistadors, though the British treatment of the Indians in Virginia differed from that of the Spanish only in quantity not in the degree of its brutality.

Race is a historical term used to describe a human population distinguishable from others based on shared biological traits. All living human beings belong to one species, *Homo sapiens*. The concept of race stems from the idea that the human species can be naturally subdivided into biologically distinct groups. In practice, however, scientists have found it impossible to separate humans into clearly defined races. Most scientists today reject the concept of biological race and instead see human biological variation as falling along a continuum. Nevertheless, race persists as a powerful social and cultural concept used to categorize people based on perceived differences in physical appearance and behavior.

Interest in defining races came from the recognition of easily visible differences among human groups. Around the world, human populations differ in their skin color, eye color and shape, hair color and texture, body shape, stature, limb proportions, and other physical characteristics. However, most anthropologists and biologists regard these differences between populations as largely superficial, resulting from adaptations to local climatic conditions during the most recent period of human evolution. Genetic analysis, which provides a deeper and more reliable measure of biological differences between people, reveals that overall, people are remarkably similar in their genetic makeup. Of the genetic differences that do exist, more variation occurs within so-called racial groups than between them. That is, two people from the same “race” are, on average, almost as biologically different from each other as any two people in the world chosen at random. This high degree of genetic diversity exists within populations because individuals from different populations have always intermingled and mated with each other. Given that populations have interbred for most of human history, most anthropologists reject the idea that “pure” races existed at some time in the distant past. Today, genetic analysis has replaced earlier methods of comparing color, shape, and size to establish degrees of relationship or common ancestry among human populations.

Even, though the term is often misused. According to Cavalli, Sforza and Luigi Luca:

The term race is often misunderstood and misused. It is often confused with ethnicity, an ambiguous term that refers mostly, though not exclusively, to cultural (non-biological) differences between groups. An ethnic group derives its identity from its distinctive customs, language, ancestry, place of origin, or style of dress. For example, the Hispanic ethnic group comprises people who trace their ancestry to Spanish-speaking countries in the Western Hemisphere. Although some people assume Hispanics have a common genetic heritage, in reality they share only a language. Members of an ethnic group with a common geographic origin often do share similar physical features. But people of the same ethnic group may also have very different physical appearances, and conversely, people of different ethnic groups may look quite similar. People may also mistakenly use the term *race* to refer to a

religion, culture, or nationality – as in the “Jewish race” or the “Italian race”—whose members may or may not share a common ancestry. The term *race* is also sometimes used to refer to the entire human species, as in the “human race.” In everyday language, the distinction between race and ethnicity has become blurred, and many people use the terms to mean the same thing. (39)

Many people believe, falsely, that differences in physical appearance have something to do with differences in the behavior, attitude, intelligence, or intrinsic worth of people. These beliefs promote *racism*, prejudice or animosity against people perceived to belong to other races.

At its worst, racism has inspired the abuse and extermination of enormous numbers of people. Recent historical examples included the near-extermination of Native Americans by European settlers of the Americas between the 16th and 20th centuries, the capture and export of Africans for use as slaves in the Americas from the early 17th to the mid-19th century, the extermination of Jews in Europe by German Nazis during World War II (1939-1945), and the system of apartheid perpetrated by Afrikaners against all nonwhite peoples in South Africa.

Around the world, human populations differ in their skin color, eye color and shape, hair color and texture, body shape, height, limb proportions, nose and lip size and shape, and other physical characteristics. For example, peoples of the Arctic, such as the Inuit, differ significantly in body form and skin color from Aboriginal Australians. Likewise, Norwegians appear quite different from Nigerians in their skin color and hair color and texture. These easily visible differences between peoples led early scientists to attempt to define races based on outward physical appearance. Such observable traits make up a person’s *phenotype*. In more recent times, scientists have tried to define races based on *genotype*, the genetic makeup of individuals. Both methods have shortcomings that illustrate the fundamental problems of racial classification.

Interest in classifying races flourished in the 19th century and continued in the 20th century. But every anthropologist proposed a different list of races, with numbers varying from as few as 2 to as many as 60 or more. Racial taxonomists usually divided into two opposing camps: “lumpers,” who minimized the number of races; and “splitters,” who divided humans into many small, local races.

Early racial classification schemes were based primarily on skin color. For example, many scholars once believed all people could be classified into one of three main races: (1) Caucasoid, or “white”; (2) Negroid, or “black”; and (3) Mongoloid, or “yellow.” These races corresponded roughly to the geographic areas of Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia, respectively.

However, some people do not fit neatly into any of these races. For example, the Aboriginal people of Australia have dark skin similar to tropical Africans. But some Aboriginal people have blond hair, unlike most Africans. Were they Negroid or Caucasoid? Some scholars added a new race, Australian, to avoid the problem. The peoples of southern India and Sri Lanka, who have dark skin like tropical Africans but facial features and hair like Europeans, posed a similar classification problem. Again, some scientists added an Indian race. One trait thought to be unique to Mongoloids was the *epicanthic fold*, a fold of skin across the inner part of the eye. But anthropologists soon discovered that certain African and Native American groups also have epicanthic folds. Should they also be classified as Mongoloid?

These examples show the difficulty in classifying races based primarily on a single physical trait: Populations that share the trait are subjectively lumped into the same race, without any scientific evidence that they are more closely related to each other than to other groups. In addition, the choice of trait is completely arbitrary. One could just as logically choose to classify races by nose shape as by skin color.

An alternative approach might classify races on the basis of particular combinations or clusters of external traits, rather than a single trait. But this approach reveals other problems. Traits that may seem uniform within a population actually vary widely between individuals, making it difficult to classify individuals into racial groups. Furthermore, physical traits are inherited independently of one another. For example, stature in a population may vary from very small to very tall and shows no relation to skin color. Each trait has a unique pattern of geographic distribution that may be unrelated to those of other traits.

Perhaps the greatest problem in racial classification involves determining the boundaries of the races. Populations from different continents or climates may differ profoundly in physical

appearance, suggesting that the differences between peoples are sharp and discrete. But scientists now recognize that most human physical characteristics vary gradually and smoothly over large geographic areas. Anthropologists refer to this gradient of variation as a *cline*. For example, skin color is distributed as a cline, generally varying along a north-south line. Skin color is lightest in northern Europeans, especially in those who live around the Baltic Sea, and becomes gradually darker as one moves toward southern Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and into northern Africa and northern subtropical Africa. Skin is darkest in people who live in the tropical regions of Africa. The lack of clear-cut discontinuities makes any racial boundary based on skin color totally arbitrary. Similar continuity exists for most other physical traits.

Racial classification has generally relied on the premise that each race can be defined by a certain set of physical features that are inherited and unchangeable. But scientists now know that a population's phenotype (visible physical characteristics) can change without genetic change. For example, the average height of adult males in Japan increased an estimated 10 cm in the span of only a few decades after 1950. This time span is too short to permit major genetic changes; changes in the Japanese diet account for the height increase. Given how rapidly some phenotypic traits can change in response to environmental conditions, they form a poor basis for defining fixed, biological races.

Race mixing highlights another problem in defining races. In the United States, the child of a white parent and a black parent is usually defined as black, because American society traditionally has not recognized intermediate racial categories. In biological terms, however, the child shares in each parent's genetic heritage equally. Until the mid-20th century, many states defined a person as black if he or she had even a small fraction of black ancestry. Most state laws specified the fraction of black ancestry that made someone black as one-fourth or one-eighth. Thus, having one black great-grandparent was sufficient to define a person as black, but having seven white great-grandparents was insufficient to define the person as white. A Virginia law (overturned in 1967) went even further, defining as black "every person in whom there is ascertainable any Negro blood"—the so-called one-drop rule. These definitions were created as part of laws against miscegenation, which were designed to prohibit interracial marriage. Anthropologists today recognize that race is also culturally relative. A

light-skinned African American considered black in the United States would be considered white by many dark-skinned populations of Africa. These examples show that race is socially and culturally constructed, not determined by biology.

A final argument against basing races on phenotype is that relatively few genes determine surface characteristics, such as skin color, hair color, and facial features. For example, fewer than ten genes determine skin color. Considered against the estimated 30,000 genes that make up the entire human genome (the total of all human genes), skin color and other external features represent a trivial source of biological variation. There are many other sources of human biological variation that we cannot see, such as variations in blood type and susceptibility to certain diseases. It is of course inevitable to be influenced by what we see, and this helps to explain why people attribute so much more importance to visible physical traits.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, several western European countries – Portugal, Spain, The Netherlands, England, and France – began sponsoring expeditions to explore regions of the world that were then largely unknown to Europeans. Rulers financed these voyages with the hopes of establishing control over foreign lands for economic and political benefit – a practice known as imperialism. From the reports of voyagers, Europeans learned of cultures quite different from their own as well as of the physical appearance of non-European peoples. Europeans generally came to believe that what they saw as bizarre and exotic customs were somehow directly related to differences in skin color, hair color and texture, and body and face shape. Thus, the concept of race developed to include both physical and cultural differences among people.

In the 1200s Europeans had little exposure to the cultures of East Asia. Many found reports by Venetian explorer Marco Polo of his travels to China and the countries of South and Southeast Asia difficult to believe. Polo described urban populations in China of over a million people, much larger than any in Europe, and unfamiliar customs, such as the use of paper money for commerce, coal and oil for fuel, and engraved wooden blocks to print documents. He noted in many instances the dietary customs of Asians, such as the eating of dog and other animals not eaten in Europe. Although

Polo recorded the skin color and appearance of the peoples he encountered, the concept of race is absent from his writings.

Regular contact between Europe and the Americas began in the late 15th century with the voyages of Italian-Spanish navigator Christopher Columbus. The first Native Americans Columbus encountered were the Arawak-speaking Taíno people of the islands of the Caribbean. In his descriptions of these people, Columbus recorded details of their olive- to copper-colored skin; thick, straight, and long black hair; and short, muscular bodies. He commented on their habits of going largely unclothed and bathing frequently. He also described their types of body adornment, including paints, gold piercing, and tattoos.

Soon after these first encounters, the Spaniards began to clash with and assert their authority over Native Americans. By the early 1500s, the Spaniards had enslaved and killed a great number of indigenous people, a pattern that would be followed for centuries by other Spanish, Portuguese, French, and British colonists of the Americas. White settlers and their financial backers in Europe justified the domination of Native Americans based in large part on notions of European racial superiority.

Europeans first came to know of most Pacific Ocean islands and their inhabitants in the 18th and 19th centuries. Archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests close connections among the many peoples of the Pacific Islands—known today as Micronesians, Melanesians, and Polynesians—although they can appear physically quite distinct. During the 1700s British navy officer Captain James Cook traveled widely in the South Pacific, meeting peoples such as the Maori of New Zealand, Tahitians, and Hawaiians. He treated these peoples with a respect uncharacteristic of other European explorers in the region.

The British established their first settlements in Australia in the late 1700s and early 1800s. The settlers soon met the Aboriginal hunter-gatherers indigenous to that continent (*see* Aboriginal Australians). In a manner very similar to that of European settlers in the Americas, the British colonists of Australia generally regarded Aborigines as an inferior race. Clashes on the frontiers of

white settlement led to a massive number of Aboriginal deaths and the enslavement and displacement of most surviving indigenous Australians.

Racial issues in the United States are often followed by prejudice, which refers to preconceived attitudes or opinions about other people. Prejudices may be favorable or unfavorable, but the term usually refers to negative attitudes held toward others based solely on their membership in a specific group. *Racism* is a form of prejudice based on perceived physical differences and usually refers to unfavorable or hostile attitudes toward people perceived to belong to another race. Racism usually results in a belief in the superiority of one's own race. One cause of prejudice and racism is the human tendency to form *stereotypes*, generalized beliefs that associate whole groups of people with particular traits. Racial stereotypes are exaggerated or oversimplified characterizations of the appearance, personality, and behavior of a group of people. For example, at one time or another, certain racial groups have been described as lazy, stupid, athletic, dishonest, violent, or miserly.

Whereas prejudice and racism refer to beliefs or attitudes about people, *discrimination* refers to actual behavior based on these attitudes. For example, racial discrimination takes place when an African American couple is denied a bank loan for a house that a similarly qualified white couple would have received. In the United States prior to the 1960s, a lack of federal laws permitted discrimination against black Americans in housing, employment, education, public accommodations, voting, and access to the judicial system. These forms of discrimination led to the civil rights movement in the United States, a movement by black Americans to achieve racial equality. Today, federal laws and government policies have outlawed most forms of racial discrimination. Some policies are designed to redress the effects of past discrimination. For example, affirmative action programs are designed to favor racial minorities in hiring and promotion, college admissions, and the awarding of government contracts.

Although cultural differences among peoples may not be rooted in biology, such differences often coincide with differences in physical appearance. Therefore the two types of variation can appear to be somehow related. It can be particularly difficult to determine whether differences in behavior – such as in basic temperament, styles of communication, or forms of ritual – have any

genetic basis. Thus, many people tend to associate the behavioral and cultural differences among peoples with the physical differences among them, often unconsciously. These kinds of associations can be difficult to avoid, even though scientific evidence does not support them.

The science of classification of race uses a taxonomic hierarchy to indicate how any one type of organism is related to other types. According to *Microsoft Student [DVD] Encarta 2009* Swedish botanist and physician Carolus Linnaeus developed the precursor to the modern classification system in the mid-1700s. In the first edition of *Systema Naturae* (1735), he set out a system for classifying plants, animals, and minerals. According to him, the scientific approach of rise of racism is:

To any particular type of organism, Linnaeus gave two Latin names, the first of which identified its genus and the second its species. Linnaeus classified humans, here black as animals, and an unpopular idea at the time. He recognized that black people belonged with monkeys and apes in the taxonomic order Anthropomorpha, which he later renamed Primates. Linnaeus also recognized all humans as belonging to a common genus, *Homo*, and species, *sapiens*. (source: Microsoft Students Encarta ® 2009 [DVD])

In later editions of *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus subdivided humans into four main: *Homo sapiens americanus*, for peoples of the Americas; *Homo sapiens europaeus*, for Europeans; *Homo sapiens asiaticus*, for Asians; and *Homo sapiens afer*, for Africans. He provided no systematic method for determining these divisions. Linnaeus also identified two other subspecies: *Homo sapiens monstrosus*, which included people with deformities, mythological giants, and the Hottentots people of southern Africa; and *Homo sapiens ferus*, which described wild children found abandoned in forests. The taxonomic divisions of the human species developed by Linnaeus resembled later racial characterizations in that he associated different temperaments and cultural traits with each subspecies. For example, he identified the Asian subspecies as melancholy, stiff, and greedy, whereas the European subspecies was described as gentle, optimistic, and inventive. Linnaeus's classification of humans was not based on scientific evidence and reflected his own European social prejudices.

During the 18th century, Christian scholars assumed that all aspects of the world could be arranged in a hierarchy of worth consisting of a series of discrete levels. At the top of the hierarchy was God, representing perfection. Below God were living things, with humans at the top and other animals ranked lower. At the bottom of the Chain of Being were inorganic materials, such as metals. Although Linnaeus did not explicitly rank humans, his attribution of temperaments to subspecies implied a ranking of Europeans first, followed by Asians and Americans, with Africans at the bottom.

But, Luigi Luca took a different approach to describing human race. Luca rejected racial classification and instead sought merely to describe the variety of forms and behaviors among human populations. In 1749 he was the first to use the term *race* to refer to a local population. He remarked that as diverse as humans might appear physically, any man and woman could successfully reproduce. Thus, he believed all people belonged to one biological group. Like others of his time, Luca believed differences in human populations resulted directly from prevailing environmental conditions and circumstances, mainly diet, climatic temperature, and the evils of enslavement resulting in the change of color and structure of the humans. These factors could make a person change form or, in his words, degenerate. According to this thinking, changes in conditions could change people physically over a few generations. In turn, these factors were used by the so-called educated and civilized group (white) to segregate the blacks.

The mentality of the most blacks too landed in finding their identity in being a follower, or like that of the whites, further adding to the cause of segregation. Thus, the mimicry and racism have together served as a weapon for the whites to demoralize and rule upon the blacks. Initially, the blacks were made to think inferior because they were black, the color of their skin, and later in the pretext that their structure was nearer to the ancient humans.

Identity, which is a set of characteristics that somebody recognizes as belonging uniquely to himself or herself and constituting his or her individual personality for life and living have been challenged by the Whites, since the earliest age. It is of ten because of people like Pecola, who prefer to have bluest eye, as the tool to be white. Similar trend is found in the majority of the black people, who find their uniqueness in being like that of the white.

III. Implication of Mimicry in *The Bluest Eye*

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is an enquiry into what leads the black peoples to imitate the white's culture. The concept of black people desiring for *white* skin goes back to the colonial era. The concept of beauty has been *white* since very long and *black* is depicted as not beautiful or more precisely 'ugly,' though many refrain from uttering it.

The Bluest Eye narrates the story of Pecola Breedlove, her parents and neighbors, who are in one or other way/s enchanted with the concept of having *white* beauty. The Breedlove family consists of Cholly, the father, Pauline, the mother and Pecola and Sammy. Though they live under the same house and share the same kitchen, there is nothing like family norms and ethics among them.

Cholly is a violent drunkard, and unfaithful to his wife. At the same time, he is abusive. He is physically abusive to his wife and sexually to his daughter. Pauline is a mammy to a white family and continues to favor them over her biological family. She treats them in a better way and is negligent towards her own family and children. She is obsessed with the concept of beauty, associated with white skin. Pecola, her daughter is black, but her master's children are white, and so, secretly, she hates herself, her husband and her daughter.

Pauline's obsession for white color begins at the age of fifteen. Her desire for a white man is expressed in the following lines:

Precious Lord take my hand/Lead me on, let me stand/I am tired, I am weak, I am worn,/ Through the storm, through the night/Lead me on to the light/Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on. When my way grows drear/Precious Lord linger near,/When my life is almost gone/Hear my cry hear my call/Hold my hand lest I fall/Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me on. (48)

This song full of passion portrays the desires of a youthful lady, who desired someone, other than her own color, to take her and drive her in the world of love. This passion for white man, to come in her life is imitation of the white's mentality and it is passed on to Pecola, her young child.

It is obvious that this passion for being white for being beautiful is inherited in Pecola from her mother. However, in young Pecola's understanding it is blue eyes, which defines the concept of

beauty. She remains silently in the dark for hours and imagines of having blue eyes, which, according to her were the prime source of *white* beauty. The world has led her to believe that she is ugly, and moreover, she is convinced that the epitome of beauty requires blue eyes.

Therefore every night, she prays that she will wake up with blue eyes. Brought up as poor and unwanted child in her family and the society, Pecola desires the acceptance and love of society. The image of Shirley temple beauty surrounds her. Since she believes, she is ugly, so everybody despises her. She thinks that if she had beautiful eyes (blue eyes) people would love and accept her. The idea that blue eyes are important for beauty is imprinted on Pecola and her whole life.

Pecola's young mind also used blamed self, for having all those family chores and intrigues. She thinks of her and family, as: "If I looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. May be they would say, why look at pretty eyed Pecola. We must not do bad things in front of these pretty eyes" (46). This inborn mania of *white is beautiful* has ruined her thinking and ultimately makes her like insane.

There are many factors responsible for Pecola's craze for blue eyes. Mr. Yacowbski, a shopkeeper is one of them, who constantly neglect her, as if she were invisible. "He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see. How can a forty two year old white immigrant shopkeeper see a little black girl" (48)? This minor incident touches the young girl, so bad that she avoids going to public and remains within the house, of course, praying for blue eyes.

Pecola is one of the hundreds of black girls, who hide away from the public, as their skin is not white, and neither have they possessed blue eyes. Even her classmates mock on her, as she is black. "Black e mo Black e mo ya daddy sleeps nekked. Stch tat a stch ta ta/stach ta ta ta ta ta ta" (50). The society around her is white dominated, if not white. So, it is obvious for a young girl like her to desire for blue eyes, as they would rescue her from all her embarrassment.

Shouted by her classmates in such a regular basis, this scorn seemed not to penetrate any more. As if it were not bad enough being ridiculed by children of her age, adults also had to mock on her. Geraldine, a colored woman, who refused to tolerate niggers, happened to walk in while Pecola was in her home. It was her son, who had lured generally calm and quiet Pecola to the house, in

absence of his parents. And then, he misbehaved by locking the door and making the young girl shout in panic. Still more, he threw a cat on her and locked the door. Upon found by his mother, Geraldine, she shouted “Get out,” she said in a firm but quiet sound, “You nasty little girl, it seems all the more true,” (72). An adult pointing her as ‘nasty,’ she is in even more firm belief that, she is a nasty poor little child. The myth of white supremacy gets injected in the child’s mind, even firmly.

Her home, was no less a place of such bullying. Her mother was not able to conceal her dislike to her and obvious affection to a white girl over her. One day Pecola was visiting her mother at the home, where she was working, she accidentally knocked over a blueberry pie. She got burnt by the hot pastry; her mother completely ignored her feelings and instead tended to the comfort of her white daughter. What Pecola received was, “Crazy fool . . . my floor, mess . . . looks what you . . . work . . . get on out . . . now that . . . crazy . . . my floor, my floor . . . my floor. Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries, and we (Frieda and her sister) backed away in dread” (85).

When, the little girl started to cry, Pauline turned on her and said, “Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh, Lord, look at your dress. Don’t cry no more. Polly will change it,” (ibid). The extreme of Pauline’s mentality is exposed, when she even rejects on saying Pecola, her daughter. On the continuous query by the young girl, whom she nurse, she simply shifts topic from Pecola’s identity to her:

“Who were they, Polly?”

“Don’t worry none, baby.”

“You gonna make another pie?”

“ ‘Course I will.”

“Who were they, Polly?”

“Hush. Don’t worry none,” she whispered, and the honesty in her words were complemented the sundown spilling on the lake. (85)

This culture of avoiding of her own daughter’s identity to her white children has a tremendous amount of impact on Pecola. This leads her to more desperate prayers, on wish to have blue eyes, so that she could be among the white ones.

In Pauline's view, Pecola was an obstacle that had the potential to get in the way of her white chargers' happiness and consequently her own happiness. Her mother, refused to show any love to Pecola because it might interfere with more important things.

For a little girl, the love of her mother is the most desired thing; however, Pecola was deprived of it. In turn, the white children, who should have been of lesser importance to Pauline became even of greater value than her own blood and flesh. All these make her believe, she is ugly and her certificate in to the world of white is to have blue eyes.

Finally, Cholly her biological father her last hope of solace from despair came the most heavily on her. He not only raped his own young daughter but also shattered all her hopes and desires towards a dignified living and life. The rape by her father is the last evidence that Pecola needs to believe that she is ugly and an unlovable girl. When fathers are made to protect and safeguards their offspring, Cholly is just the opposite. He hurts abusive Pecola physically and in one attempt measures up to the years of hurtful mockery. He took away from her the one thing that was utterly and completely hers. After the rape, Pecola was never the same. Her pathetic situation is narrated, thus:

She was so sad to see. Grown people looked away, children those who were not frightened by her, laughed outright. The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendril, sap green days, walking up and down, up and down, her jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbow bent, hands on shoulders, she failed her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach – could not even see – but which filled the valleys of the mind. (162)

After the rape, Pecola went insane. Her search for identity was denied by her everlasting desire to be loved. Her purpose in life to be beautiful, and to be a loved one, was forever shattered. Her family and community made it impossible for her ever to be sanely. Moreover, for a young girl, who was rejected from her family, neighbors and the society, physical harassment was the final blow.

However, Morrison has lived up to the hope of the young innocent. By the end of the novel, she makes Pecola believe, she has the blue eyes. However, it is not the reality, she still possesses her

black eyes, but the girl thinks in the other way. She believes that most people treat her in a funny way, because they were jealous of her blue eyes. Pecola's yearned for the acceptance and love of society seen through her eyes. No matter if that acceptance and love of society seen through her eyes. NO matter if that acceptance and love were really there, she thought it was and therefore was able to survive. Pecola found herself only by going insane. Although, Pecola is not accepted for reasons she does not understand, she puts her exclusion from society into terms she can apprehend. Society influences her identity. They mold her into what she becomes by not giving her the true guidance and approval she needs. This ending tries to justify, to some extent, some of the absurd context of the young girl in the text.

This curious ending, where the naive adolescent girl, is given a partial justice, in the form of insanity is simply imitation to the white culture. However, herein lay the concept of mimicry parable. Morrison incorporates characters, incidents and themes all to recall the imitation myth. However, the myth appears in a rather distorted form. Pecola, the female protagonist of the novel, undergoes through a pathetic situation and has to face a tragic downfall and ultimately suffers from lunacy.

Shunned by her town's prosperous black families, as well as its white families, Pecola lives with her alcoholic father and embittered, overworked mother in a shabby, two room store front that reeks of the hopeless destitution that overwhelm their lives. In awe of her clean, well-groomed schoolmates, and convinced of her own intense ugliness. Pecola tries to make her disappear as she wishes fervently desperately for the blue eyes of a white girl. Pecola's story – her tragic failure to find out the truth, i.e. her position in the society, to find her happiness in knowing who she is and her worth to herself and others – recalls the tragedies of being black amongst the white and in the white's domination. Morrison, to achieve her goal has successfully altered the myth in terms of setting and characters.

The setting of the novel recalls the situation of modern America, where the white colored people live in the sophisticated environment and the middle and lower class blacks live in the slum or slim like houses, which in turn are, affected by poor mentality residents, like Cholly and Pauline.

Their mentality is limited to copying the white and their life style. In the turn, they have lost their identity, or have got themselves mingled with the white.

Pecola is an output of this mentality, where the humble child seeks the only way for salvation from her miseries is to be like the white, itself. Pecola's desire to possess the blue eyes is to defy the black world of hatred and be free. To be free, the individuals like Pecola, must take risks. In the context, Morrison sees white men are ordinarily regarded as bad men, as they leave their families and refuse responsibilities, as free men. These men, who have a nice wildness and who are fearless and comfortable with that fearlessness, are misunderstood and therefore condemned. Morrison admires them as adventurers who refuse to be controlled and who are willing to take risks. Because they own themselves, they are able to choose their own way to live their lives.

They felt that they had been dealt a bad hand, and they just made up other rules. They couldn't win with the house deck and that was part of their daring. Whereas other Black people – they were horrified by all that bad behavior. That's all a part of the range of what goes on among us, you know. Their behavior points out a valuable principle to the non-outlaw blacks. Blacks have been cut off from their own natures and needs by conforming to the rules of white society.

The outlaw serves as a partial solution to the problem of being out of touch with the essential self. Until blacks understand in our own terms what our rites of passage are, what we need in order to nourish ourselves, what happens when we don't get that nourishment, then what looks like erratic behavior but isn't will frighten and confuse us. Life becomes comprehensible when we know what rules we are playing by.

She knows that, in our society, these outlaws have unfortunate and even disastrous effects on others and often end up unemployed or in prison. Nevertheless, in her world view, evil is as useful as good and sometimes good looks like evil and sometimes evil looks like good. Cholly, the evil looks like good, and the good, Pecola looks like bad. This is due to the external vision of judging people, the gift of the white culture.

Characters like Cholly are born in this society, where the blacks are treated as non humans. He was abandoned by his mother and father and raised by his aunt, Jimmy, who later dies leaving him

to face the tough world on his own. Cholly has his first sexual experience with Darlene, in a forest and was caught by two whites, who humiliate him in the spot. Later, he runs away to Georgia, in fear that Darlene might have been pregnant. In Georgia he finds his father, who was a full time drunkard and gambler and, who simply neglects him, as any other street person. Then, grown up in the society, that was white ruled and dominated, he learned to hate white, like every blacks of his company.

His hatred and inhumane towards the whites, one day explodes on his own daughter. One day, when he sees Pecola working in the kitchen, he confuses herself to the first time, he had seen Pauline. He gets emotionally charged and cannot control his evil passion, as narrated in following manner:

With conflicting emotions of guilt, pity, love, revulsion, and fury, Cholly watches Pecola standing at the sink one foot scratching the back of her calf with her toe. The gesture reminds him of that time in the past in Kentucky when he saw his to be wife for the first time which arouse emotions in him and ultimately rapes his daughter.

(126)

Thus, takes place the worst of crimes, which has its root, somewhere in the social injustice prevalent in the society. It has to do with the culture of white's domination and hatred towards the black.

Describing the scene of Pecola's rape, the narrator, Frieda remembers as:

He closed his eyes, letting his fingers dig into her waist. The rigidness of her shocked body, the silence of her stunned throat, was better than Pauline's easy laughter had been. The confused mixture of his memories of Pauline and the doing of a wild and forbidden thing excited him, and a bolt of desire ran down his genitals, giving it length, and softening the lips of his anus. Surrounding all of this lust was border of politeness. He wanted to fuck her tenderly. But the tenderness would not hold. The tightness of her vagina was more than he could bear. His soul seemed to slip down his guts and fly out into her, and the gigantic thrust he made into her than provoked the only sound she made – a hollow suck of air in the black of her throat. Like the rapid loss of air from a circus balloon. (128)

These lines depict the mentality of evil, who forget the sacred relationship hold by a father and a daughter. Passion ruled over, and nothing of good would remind him of their relationship. This act of Electra complexity was, too an act of imitation of the society, of course, ruled by the white.

The scene of rape has, also something to do with Pauline, the mother. Pauline rejects the real life and likes to live in the fictional world, created by the white. She clearly sides the white children to her own blood child – Pecola and Sammy. This mentality of Pauline has to do with the ways of bringing up and mentality shaped by the whites. A thorough inspection of Pauline’s character enables us to think that she is rejecting the real world – her family and black inheritance and is fast falling prey to the white culture. She utterly rejects the existent world and lives in the fantasy of her created wonderland. Indulge in the world of illusion, and says:

The onliest time I be happy seem like was when I was in the picture show. Every time, I got, I went. I’d go early, before the show started. They’d cut off the lights, and everything be black. Then the screen would light up, and I’d move right on in the picture white men taking such good of the women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses with the bathtubs right in the same room with the toilet. Them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard.

(95)

It is obvious from these lines that Pauline does not want to come back to the real world because it is painful to her. She is so much absorbed in the world of illusion (theatre) that it was too hard for her to come home and to look at Cholly, her husband. This made their relationship turn sour and, finally Cholly crossed the limitations that no father should dare to.

Pauline’s rejection of the reality of being black has directly come from her mentality ruled by the whites. She works as a mammy in a white family, in order to forget her reality. She takes shelter in the white’s family to get mental pleasure. Her work for the white family is so consuming that she forgets her own reality and the duties towards her family. In doing so, she finds unexplainable success and sense of satisfaction.

Being with the white, she assumes of being equal to them and worthy in the eyes of the society. It rubs off on her and she also feels as if she is part of all positive virtues and the other hand, the more time she spends with her own black family, she is overcome with feelings that she is ugly, her husband is ugly and on top, her daughter is of practically of no use.

Upon coming on this realization, she is in dilemma, which way to go; to lead a life of so-called dignity with the whites or to reject it and come back to her own black world. However, she decided in against to her biological family of equity and justice and started to more and more time with the white family. To Pauline, this decision is obvious and she makes it hastily without a second thought, she mentally leaves her family in search of 'perfect life.' So, she completely neglects her house, husband and the young Pecola. She hardly thinks of them, and whenever she thinks of them, a bitter sense overcomes her, and tries not to think again. She does not find working and thinking of her family as pleasurable, as she finds in the house of the white family. In this regard, the young narrator remarks:

More and more she neglected her house, her children, her man – they were like the afterthoughts one has just before sleep, the early morning and late – evenings edges of her day, the dark edges that made the daily life with the Fisher lighter, more delicate, more lovely. Here she would arrange things, clean things, line things up in a neat rows. Here her foot flopped around on deep pile carpets, and there was no uneven sound. Here she found beauty, order, cleanliness, and praise. (99)

These lines are evidence to the mentality of Pauline. Her slave mentality is obvious from her desire to get herself submitted to the whites. Moreover, she finds her life meaningless, while she is at her house and with her family members but, she thinks herself of importance, when she is amid her masters – the Fisher family. The narrator further comments, on her slave mentality, as:

All meaningfulness of her life was in her work. For her virtues here were intact. She was an active woman, did not drink, smoke, or carouse, defend herself mistily against Cholly, rose above him in every way, and felt she was fulfilling a mother's role conscientiously when she pointed out their father's faults to keep them from having

them, or punished them when they showed any slovenliness, no matter how slight, when she worked twelve to sixteen hours a day to support them. And the world itself agreed with her. (100)

Thus, Pauline depicts the extreme of impersonation of the white culture. In fact, her role is nothing more than a puppet whose sole purpose was to provide fun to its master.

Morrison depicts mimicry of white people, through yet another character – Soaphead Church, whose real name is Micah Elihue Whitcomb. He is a psychic healer of sorts, who hates people. He comes from a racially mixed family; he is part white and part Chinese, which accounts for his attitude of superiority over others, specially, blacks. However, he is a respectable person in the society, but his mentality towards the black people is that they are inferior. He is presented as: “He became a Reader, Adviser, and Interpreter of Dreams. It was a profession that suited him” (130).

As an adviser and interpreter he appears to give advice to people in Lorain. “People came to him in dread, whispered in dread, wept and pleaded in dread. And dread was what he consulted” (136), narrates the writer about him. He, being a member of the local church, instead of doing well used to misuse his power to make situation even damnation to the black people. Still more, he used to play with the young girls of the community, who were easy to handle and fell in his prey. In the regard, the narrator says: [. . .] He further limited his interests to little girls. They were usually manageable and frequently seductive” (132). His evil desire is further expressed in the following lines:

I gave them mint, money and they would eat ice-cream with their legs open while I played with them. It was like a party. And there was nastiness, and there wasn't any filth, and there wasn't any order, and there wasn't any grooming – just the light laughter of little girls and me. And there wasn't any look – any long funny look – any funny Velma look. No looks that make you feel dirty afterwards. That makes you want to die. With little girls it is all clean and good and friendly. (143-144)

It is prove that Soaphead, who by profession is a holy prophet, and supposedly the messenger to God, is in fact an evil character – a manipulator of evil desires in the children.

Pecola goes to Soaphead, as her last place to find solace for her worries – to have blue eyes. But, Soaphead, instead of consoling her to believe her inner beauty that she has blue eyes, misuses her, as seen in the following lines:

What do you want my child?

She stood there, her hands folded across her stomach.

A little protruding pot of tummy. “Maybe, maybe you can do it for me?”

Do what for you?

I can’t go to school no more. And I thought you could help me.

Help you how? Tell me. Don’t be afraid.

My eyes.

What about your eyes?

I want them blue. (137-138)

Pecola, has come to him for desiring blue eyes, but, Soaphead, the self claimed saint has no intention of solacing the child. Instead, he is under the false assumption that he has given the child a miracle – blue eyes. He boasts of his illusion in his letter to God.

I, I have caused a miracle. I gave her (Pecola) the eyes (blue). I gave her the blue, blue, the bluest eye. Cobalt blue. A streak of it right at of your own blue heaven. No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily after. I, I have found it meet and right so to do.

Now you are jealous. You are jealous of me. (144)

He thinks self of godly capacity and claims that he (God) is jealous of him. But, what he knows not of him is he has cheated himself. In doing so, again the hegemony of white supremacy plays a factor as, he always wants to imitate the white’s way of living. Soaphead is white, he wants the blacks to imitate and follow him.

However, poor Pecola falls in his prey. Upon, her enquiry on how, she should have blue eyes, he tricks her into poisoning an old, sick dog, he hates. He tells Pecola that if the dog behaves strangely, then that was a sign from God that her eyes would turn blue the next day. Pecola feeds the

dog with the strange meat (which had poison on it). Then, she sees that the dog chokes, falls down and dies. Horrified, she runs out of the house, but under the assumption, that the next day, her eyes would be blues.

Pecola is the central figure, who stands prime in desire of wanting white's complexion, especially, blue eyes. A general query, what makes her so crazy on the want of the blue eyes? What makes Pecola believe in Soaphead, when he tells her, that she has blue eyes? It has to do with the myth of *white* is beautiful, which has its root in the concept of perception, a gift of the Europeans. The Europeans ruled and dominated most parts of Africa and Asia during the late seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. During this era, they of course, laden the colonized people with their culture and religion, but however, it was white is beautiful concept that they bestowed most on the local people.

Perception is a key element in *The Bluest Eye*: how the individual is perceived or is seen by others, how the individual internalizes that perception, and how the individual perceives others. The interaction of these perceptions helps to create and reinforce the individual's sense of identity or lack of a sense of identity.

The process of identity building begins when the infant (Pecola) sees herself reflected in the mother's eyes; this gives the child what is sometimes called a sense of presence. This experience enables the infant to see others and to give presence to them. This reciprocal exchange – seeing oneself and being given a presence through the eyes of others and in turn giving them presence – continues through childhood and adulthood.

Black people moving to the Americas started as early as the seventeenth century. Most of them were imported to the Americas, by force, as domestic slaves. And decades passed until, during the 1860s, when constitutionally the blacks of the Americas (during the presidency of Abraham Lincoln) were provided with equal rights and status, but, of course, never practically followed in practice. However, the blacks of Southern States were reeling under harsher social and economic injustice, than in the North.

As such, thousands migrated to the Northern part of the America during the 1910s and 1920s and this rate was at the epitome during the 1940s. Though there desires and wish for a Free States were still not fulfilled. Morrison places her characters in extreme situations; she forces them to the edge of endurance and then pushes them beyond what we think human beings can bear. These conditions reveal their basic nature. We see that even good people act in remarkable and in terrible ways.

All these people were in one or the other way in search for heroic concept of freedom, however, theirs' concept of freedom was mimicry, meaning, influenced from the white people. That's the way such people survive, who went under, who didn't, what the civilization was, because quiet as it's kept much of our business, our existence here, has been grotesque. It really has. The fact that we are a stable people making an enormous contribution in whatever way to the society is remarkable because all you have to do is scratch the surface. It is not for the individuals but as a race, and there is something quite astonishing there and that's what peaks the curiosity. Though, there are no books written on these everyday people, neither they are elaborated by the state, however, they are extraordinary whether wicked, or stupid or wonderful or whatever they have been.

The rape of the innocent Pecola, is of course an extraordinary event, which left varying impact on different characters of the novel. The young narrator, Frieda and her sister Claudia were extremely astounded and bewildered by the act of Cholly, the father. However, they too, were as hopeless as the young Pecola. Their place in their house, though rather better than Pecola was no more than furniture kept in the house. When introduced to a stranger the sisters were named but merely pointed out like materials, as: "Frieda and I were introduced to him – merely pointed out. Like, here is the bathroom; the clothes closet is here; and these are my kids, Frieda and Claudia; watch out for this window; it doesn't open all the way" (10). This culture followed in the middle class white family, depicts that the situation of white children were no good than that of the black.

Relationship between perception and identity differs slightly. Sartre identifies the look (being seen) as crucial to developing identity. The Look confirms the individual's identity; however, it simultaneously threatens the individual's sense of freedom. The Look reduces the individual to an

object in someone else's reality and takes away the individual's sense of self and potential to be. In other words, the *look* controls and reduces the individual to the status of the *other*. A power struggle ensues as the individual tries to regain control by reducing the look to an object; that is, the individual tries to reduce the person with the look to the status of the other. The individual gives up the effort to take away someone else's autonomy and to make the person an object or the *other*. The individual accepts his/her autonomy and responsibility for his/her own life as well as his/her status as an object in someone else's view/reality. This process may occur between individuals, between groups in a society, and between societies.

In *The Bluest Eye*, characters in the black community accept their status as the other, which has been imposed upon them by the white community. In turn, blacks assign the status of other to individuals like Pecola within the black community. Morrison uses the technique of seeing and not seeing and being seen and not being seen throughout the novel. Pecola is invisible in that her beauty is not perceived, and she desires to disappear or not be perceived. The eye is a natural symbol for perception or seeing.

Thus, the desire of imitating the white's complexion and culture, ruined not only Breedlove's family, but of hundreds of blacks. Cholly, in an attempt to disregard the white culture, met a tragic death in a workhouse, and, Pauline now is free to serve the white family, which she does. Sammy ran away to an unknown town, probably, to be one more Cholly Breedlove. Pecola gave birth to a dead baby from the incest relationship and, in assumption that she has blue eyes, walks up and down the street flapping her arms, as if she was a bird that could not fly.

Her hereditary desire for white complexion turned her to insane, which is described by the narrator in the following manner:

The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendril, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she flailed her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the

blue void it could not reach – could not even see – but which filled the valleys of the mind. (162)

Young Pecola can still be seen somewhere and everywhere, even today, standing high in proof of what might herald from the futile attempt of white mimicry.

Morrison shows understanding of and, often, compassion, for characters who commit horrific deeds, like incest-rape or infanticide. This trait springs in large part from her attitude toward good and evil, which she distinguishes from the conventional or Western view of good and evil. She describes a distinctive view which, she claims, blacks have historically held toward good and evil. She responds about these traits in *The New Revolution* in the following manner:

It was interesting that black people at one time seemed not to respond to evil in the ways other people did, but that they thought evil had a natural place in the universe; they did not wish to eradicate it. They just wished to protect themselves from it, maybe even to manipulate it, but they never wanted to kill it. They thought evil was just another aspect of life. [. . .] It's because they're not terrified by evil, by difference.

Evil is not an alien force; it's just a different force. (24)

She shifts the boundaries between what we ordinarily regard as good and what as evil, so that judgments become difficult. This reflects the complexity of making moral judgments in life.

Her villains are not all evil, nor are her good people saints, but are mingled somewhere between the societal upbringings. The evil, Cholly in *The Bluest Eye* is also the product of the white supremacy and unjust being performed on him; Pauline, too, somewhere is a character of sympathy, as she is desperate to find her identity in the white world, being a white. And, of course, humble Pecola, is the extreme of the implication of the white mimicry. And, yet there is Sammy, who knows, will grow up to become one more Cholly. Thus, the story ends up with a sadistic note, indicating that the trend of losing one's identity is likely to flourish, as most blacks are in the trend of Pecola.

IV. Conclusion

Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* depicts the mentality of those black people, who, try to find their identity and solace within the framework of the truth created by the white people and their culture. The novel portrays a vivid picture of those black people, who wants to find uniqueness within the limitations fixed by the white people.

Pecola Breedlove, the young protagonist of the novel internalizes the concept of “white is beautiful,” and to her, it is the only source of salvation from her sufferings and woes. She is crazy for having blue eyes, as, in her understanding, they are the identity of the white people, and upon its possession, she will be one of them. She is raped by her own father, and later gives birth to a dead child; and ultimately becomes crazy, in assumption, that she poses the blue eyes. She is the most tragic output of the implication of the mimicry of the white people’s mentality.

Similarly, Pauline, Pecola’s mother is another character, who simply hate being in the company of her own people, including her husband, Cholly and children, Pecola and Sammy. Besides, she also has internalized hatred towards the people of her community, as they are black. She works as a mammy for a white family, and want to work as long as sixteen to eighteen hours, just to avoid her family and society. Still more, she hates her daughter, as she reminds of her own blackness.

Cholly, the head of the family is a full time drunkard, gambler, a rapist and, also a worker in a factory, owned by a white man. He was born to an unwed mother; his father ran away the day of his birth and his mother abandoned him three days later. This horrible beginning reflects his everyday views and actions. And, later, when he grew up to find his father, he too, did not cast a second look on him. This status left him in having extreme hatred against the society and, especially, the whites, as in his understanding everything was created by them. He hates his job, his employer, his family, and top of all his race – black people. In the rage of passion born out of this hatred towards the white people and the community, he has turned in to an animal. He has no sense of responsibility to his family and children. He even rapes his own daughter and leaves her in the desperate situation, to tackle the tragedy.

Sammy, son of Cholly and Pauline is probably another black character to have the destiny of another Cholly, and probably another Pauline and Pecola. About this character, Morrison in the epilogue of the novel simply writes – he ran away from the house, where, nobody knows. Sammy is a clear hint of another bead in the trend of Cholly, gift by the illusion created by the white culture.

Consequently, the abandonment of their own culture and tradition in bid to adopt others has left the black people and their culture in peril. However, in Morrison's view it is not only the white people to be blamed for this mess, but also to the mentality of the black people. It is clear that most black people have neglected their own rich cultural values and heritage of the past in the attempt to glorify them in the wave of being white. With these references, Morrison, has vividly exposed the self-centered tendency of the black people, who are reeling under the illusion of the white mimicry, to find the epitome of solace.

Works Cited

- Angelo, Bonnie. "The Pain of Being Black." *Time* 22 May (1980): 48-50.
- Baldwin, James. *Notes of Native Son*. New York: Penguin Books, 1955.
- Bakerman, Jane S. "Failures of Love: Female Initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison." *American Literature* 52 (1981) 541-63.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Blackburn, Simon. *Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Boggs, James. "Uprooting Racism and Racists in the United States." *The American Dream*. Ed. Shreedhar Prasad Lohani, Arun Gupto and P. Chalise. Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, 1995.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with Thousand Faces*. London: Paladin, 1988. 240-50.
- Cavalli, Sforza and Luigi Luca. "Race" *Microsoft Students Encarta* ® 2009 [DVD]. Redmond: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.
- ___. *The Great Human Diasporas: The History of Diversity and Evolution*. Trans. Sarah Thorne. New York: Addison- Wesley Perseus, 1995.
- Conard, Joseph. *Collection of Essays*. London: Cambridge, Cambridge Press, 1982.
- Davis, Cynthia. "Self, Society and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction." *Contemporary Literature* 23 (1982): 323-32.
- Douglas, Frederic. *Narrative of an American Slave*. Boston: Ginu and Company, 1847.
- Ellman, Richard and Charles Fieldelson. *The Modern Tradition*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford, 1965. 615-20.
- Hulme, Peter. *Subversive Archipelagoes*. Boston: New City Publications, 1989.
- Iannone, Corole. "Toni Morrison's Career." *Time* 84.6 (1987): 59-220.
- Keith, W. Olson. *Modern America: An Outline of American History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1955.

Le Clair, Thomas. "The Language must not Sweat." *The New Republic*. 21 March (1981):
126-47.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. London: Vintage, 1970.

Said, Edward. *Western Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1987.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York:
Routledge, 1987.

Wilentz, Gay. "Civilization Underneath: African Heritage and Cultural Discourse in Toni
Morrison Song of Myself." *African American Review* 26.1 (1992): 61-76.